

nothing. It is only because the song falls in with his own thoughts that it calls forth a response from Bassanio.

And so he chooses the leaden casket. He is a soldier, and the leaden casket threatens. He is both a scholar and a man of the world and he has learned by experience that ornament is deceptive. But, more than all, he loves Portia truly, and the leaden casket calls upon him to "give" for her sake, while the gold and silver tempt him with offers of "gain." When Portia, in the early part of the story, complained because she was unable "to choose one nor refuse none," Nerissa comforted her with the reflection that the caskets would "never be chosen rightly, but by one who should rightly love." When Bassanio chose the leaden casket, Nerissa's prediction came true.

The Important Characters in "The Merchant of Venice."

Antonio. Although the bond story arises out of the relations of Antonio to Shylock and Bassanio, yet Antonio himself does not in person play an important part in *The Merchant of Venice*; and his character as presented in the play is not difficult to analyse or to understand. From his relations with Shylock it appears that he is a merchant of influence on the Rialto; and throughout the play we are given the impression that he possesses great wealth. His enmity towards Shylock seems to have grown wholly out of the fact that Shylock was a usurer, and that he oppressed those who came into his power. But Antonio in showing his contempt for Shylock had apparently heaped upon him personal indignities which aroused his bitter hatred. And when Shylock complains of his treatment Antonio replies:

"I am as like to call thee so (dog) again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too."

Besides showing this spirit of intolerance towards Shylock, Antonio is over-confident as to his own fortunes; and this blind confidence, as we have seen, brings with it its own nemesis.

Aside from his relations towards Shylock, Antonio is best judged by the estimation in which he is held by his friends. Salarino says of him, "a kinder gentleman treads not the earth." Bassanio describes him as "the best conditioned and